



Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

Matthew G. Bevin, Governor

Charles G. Snavely, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Energy and Environment Cabinet Announces Winner of Annual 'Capture the Earth' Photography Contest *Middle school student takes home gift certificate from Kentucky Department of Parks*

Frankfort, Ky. (April 19, 2016) – Drakes Creek Middle School seventh-grader Leslie Hale, 13, is the winner of the sixth-annual "Capture the Earth" photography contest, sponsored by the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet in celebration of Earth Day.

Hale photographed a rainbow over Cumberland Falls using a Nikon Coolpix camera.

"I like how this image captures the beauty of Cumberland Falls through the waterfall and rainbow shining up and out," said Hale. "When I first saw the rainbow, I was speechless. But we were sad to see trash in the water. Visitors should be more careful to keep our water clean."

The annual "Capture the Earth" contest was initiated in 2011 with 27 entries and has attracted an increasing number of submissions each year. Ninety-two photographs were entered into last year's contest with 106 entries this year.

"We had many outstanding photos entered in this year's competition," said Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Charles Snavely. "So many quality photos were entered that we have decided to name two honorable mentions so these middle school students will get the recognition they deserve and to share their love of our natural world with others."

Skyler Loomis, 13, a seventh-grader from Menifee Middle School, received an Honorable Mention as his photo captured a Monarch caterpillar on a milkweed plant.

"We need to understand that even the smallest things that seem to improve our lives may not be healthy for other creatures, like pesticides," said Loomis. "I haven't seen a lot of butterflies and we need to help them regain balance in nature and live a healthy life."

Benjamin Michael Tackett, 11, a sixth-grader from Allen Central Middle School, received an Honorable Mention for his photo taken at the Red River Gorge last December.

"This photo was taken on a trail down inside the gorge and it's not only beautiful, but peaceful," said Tackett. "You can hike down and then rest on a rock looking at this view."

"When we plan vacations we forget about what Kentucky has to offer and honestly, it can't get any better than this," he continued. "Water, mountains, wildlife...what more could you ask for?"

Leslie Hale will be recognized during the state government Earth Day Celebration, 10:30 a.m., Thursday, April 21 at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort. Leslie will receive a two-night stay with her family at a Kentucky State Resort Park of her choice, compliments of the Kentucky Department of Parks. The Earth Day celebration is open to the public. For more information and to see the students' winning photographs, visit <http://eec.ky.gov/Pages/earthday.aspx>.

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Editors: The three award-winning photographs are attached. Larger formats for print are available by emailing Ricki.gardenhire@ky.gov.

Leslie Hale, a seventh-grader at Warren County's Drakes Creek Middle School, captured this photo of Cumberland Falls. Leslie is the winner of the 2016 Capture the Earth Photography Contest for middle school students, which is sponsored each year by the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet.

Skyler Loomis, 13, a seventh-grader at Menifee Middle School, captured a Monarch caterpillar on a milkweed plant. Skyler received an honorable mention in the 2016 Capture the Earth Photography Contest for middle school students, which is sponsored each year by the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet.

Benjamin Michael Tackett, 11, a sixth-grader at Allen Central Middle School in Floyd County, took a shot in Kentucky's Red River Gorge. Benjamin received an honorable mention in the 2016 Capture the Earth Photography Contest for middle school students, which is sponsored each year by the Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet.